





41

A

# LETTER

ON THE

## MEDICAL EMPLOYMENT

OF

# WHITE MUSTARD SEED.

BY

A MEMBER OF THE LONDON COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

Ουδεμια ποα η βια, τον θανατον βελη κλαει.

---

LONDON :

WILLIAM CARPENTER,  
10, BROAD STREET, BLOOMSBURY.

---

1826.

Wood and Green, Printers, 15, O.

Littlewood and Green, Printers, 15, Old Bailey.

THIS letter was intended for a medical publication : its length occasioned its appearance in the present form. The Author has no wish to screen himself behind an anonymous signature, nor to mix himself up in contemptible notoriety with what is altogether worthless. If any feel aggrieved at an inadvertency of expression, his name is as comeatable as his personal abode.



## LETTER,

*&c.*

---

MY DEAR SIR,

PERHAPS no remedy ever excited so much general conversation, and at the same time so little rational enquiry as White Mustard Seed : it suddenly became omnipotent of cure without the Physician being aware of its efficacy, or that it was even endowed with a chemical subtlety on which an operation of any sort could be grounded. At the present moment it actually constitutes in itself a family medicine chest, nearly throughout the kingdom. In France it has succeeded to the medical honours of Eau de Cologne at the toilette of every lady of fashion ; and over more distant parts of the Continent it is shewn to the proof, that an active agency is quickly realizing (by all that money and in-

genuity can devise) the grand scheme of universal specific: so that the opposite varieties of climate and disease must all fall within its corrective and salutary influence. Surely our forefathers were sadly lacking their customary shrewdness, when they estimated so lowly the sanative properties of this singular production ! for the curative wonders with which it is now daily accredited, really threaten to annihilate an entire profession,— Doctor Gilead Solomon,— and even the almost as marvellous Prince Hohenlohe. As you are the editor of a journal which is as distinguished for its fearless independence, as by an unrivalled circulation, you may do well to warn the unfortunate invalid against trusting all his hope of returning health to a substance, which, I think I shall be able to shew, is as destitute of medical virtue, as it is unfit for the more ordinary application of household economy. I have had some few opportunities of giving it a fair, full, and unprejudiced trial. I have watched it closely in the wards of a public charity, where we do not expect to find our patients governed by that fashionable conceit which can either neutralize or give infallibility to any thing. They took it, as unconscious of its celebrity, as I was that it did not deserve it. Its operation has been sought for in sound

health, and in almost every stage of dissimilar affliction. It has been given, for various periods, in doses the most minute, and over-abundant; and I do affirm, that upon every occasion its simple effect was to create heat, distention, and offensiveness, without being possessed of so much aperient property as to be able to carry itself off unassisted. I wish you to understand, that in the cases thus far alluded to, the bowels were in their healthy state, or as nearly so as we could get them: but where diarrhœa accompanied other symptoms, the seed passed off as rapidly as all such mechanical remedies might be expected to do; whilst, in the opposite condition, it tended rather to confirm the constipation, than relieve it, besides giving the intolerable fume of sulphuretted hydrogen to the feculent deposit. In chronic ailments, such as rheumatism, epilepsy, and derangement of the digestive viscera, we could not, after attempts the most diligent and persevering, discover even a shade of amendment, unless we except a solitary instance of paralysis, in which the poor woman expressed herself as "something better," without obtaining any real advantage in the end. In the different stages of typhus, phthisis, and indeed in all acute disease, the vitiated action ran on so quickly, that we were afraid any longer

to trust to so inactive an antidote, lest a human life, however insignificant in society, became sacrificed to so foolish an enterprise.

You may believe that some little wonderment was excited by the result of these experiments — that a favorite panacea of such lofty and extravagant pretensions, and which was to shame and disperse the whole study of medicine, should, on coming to the proof, actually want the humble efficacy of a little rhubarb or magnesia. I confess it still appears irreconcilable, how an article so entirely powerless and unmedicinal should, let the stratagem be what it may, acquire the ascendancy and repute it has done. So much for its negative virtues. In febrile disorders depending on abdominal derangement, or structural lesion, the inconsiderate use of White Mustard Seed is not only hurtful, but may prove absolutely fatal, as the following luckless case, which I take from my note book, will sufficiently demonstrate.

Sept. 12th, 1826. — AMY ROBERTS — 17 — unmarried — ill with fever 19 days. The account from my medical friend in attendance is, that with the usual symptoms of fever there was a prominent disturbance of the cerebral functions, arising seemingly from their sympathy with a

morbid state of the mucous lining of the intestines, rather than from any serous effusion, or local congestion in the brain itself; he tells me that half-scruple doses of calomel, united with sudorifics, and the timely application of leeches to the abdomen, speedily vanquished every unfavourable appearance, and that four days ago he ordered the sulphate of quina, and discontinued his daily visits.

The girl was left in a state of simple debility. Being anxious to regain strength, and return to her servitude (from which she had been absent a fortnight), she readily yielded to the officious advice of a talkative doctress in the neighbourhood, who unfortunately importuned her to the purchase of a pound of White Mustard Seed. Six table spoonsful were taken (without being parted with) on the 10th inst. Towards the evening of that day she felt uneasy; abdomen tense; the stays painful; face flushed; lips unsteady; and as the feverish excitement advanced, she became intellectually confused, and the night waned without sleep or refreshment.

11th. The mustard seed was nevertheless persisted in, to the same extent, and with the

like effect : getting rapidly worse. I saw her on the

12th. Present symptoms are—Pulse 110, small, and slightly wiry ; skin harsh, but not intensely hot ; there have been some partial starts of perspiration on the chest and forehead. Delirious, and noisy throughout the night ; the pupils of the eyes are dilated, and slowly contractile ; much throbbing of the temporal vessels, and the tongue (which is seen with difficulty) looks dry in the centre, moist and clammy at the edges. Abdomen inflated and exquisitely sensible ; she moans on the slightest pressure over either iliac region. This morning a considerable quantity of blood passed with some mustard seed and faecal matter—not saved—(which I regret very much).

Applicenter hirudines xx abdomini statim.

Glacies capiti raso.

Hydr. submurr. gr. xv.

Pulv. antimon. gr. iii.

— opii gr. i.

Sit pulvis, statim sumendus.

The leeches, and ice to the head, tranquillised her much ; but rigors and cold clammy perspirations supervening, she expired soon after midnight.

*Sectio Cadaveris*—eight hours after death.—  
*Abdomen*: General peritonitis, with trifling effusion of discoloured serum. On laying open the cavity of the ilium, a small, jagged, and ash-coloured ulcer had penetrated the mucous and muscular coats, and laid bare, to the extent of a shilling, the interior of the peritoneal covering, but without perforating it.\*

About the ileo-cœcal valve there were three or four ulcerating specks, similar in character, but smaller, and more superficial in extent. A vast portion of mucous membrane was *dotted* and inflamed by the protrusion of tumefied follicles, and in one or two places it was partially eroded *at the spot* of these follicular ulcerations: this was particularly noticed along the track of the colon, and rectum, where mustard seed exerts itself especially, and often at the sigmoid flexure takes up a determined lodgment.

*Lungs*.—Beautifully healthy.

*Mesenteric Glands*.—Enlarged and deeply reddened.

\* I have remarked this coat is particularly tenacious of giving way to ulceration.

*Head.*—A slight effusion of serum between the arachnoid and pia mater, in the lateral ventricles, and theca vertebralis. Substance of the brain, and plexus choroides, vascular.

It would appear from the above post mortem examination, coupled with the previous history of the case, that the follicles of the intestines enlarged, until they distended, inflamed, and perhaps ulcerated the mucous membrane; that this morbid action gave rise to all the constitutional derangement which followed; and that the prompt and appropriate measures resorted to for the removal of the cause, first arrested, and finally subdued every unpromising symptom; that during convalescence, before the parts had recovered their tone of health, and while susceptibility was more than ordinarily on the alert, a crude, heating, and mechanical stimulus was applied to the very surface, that asked only for the most soothing and gentle stamina; and, that this local excitement of the mustard seed re-occasioned follicular enlargement, renewed the disposition to ulceration, and finally brought on fatal peritonitis, is as palpable as the track of a poison which has run its deadly course. In all hæmorrhoidal affections, and in most of the sexual disorders of females, there

cannot, with the exception perhaps of aloes, be a more unfortunate prescription. A case also of intestinal hæmorrhage has actually come under my notice, where the mechanical heat afforded by the accumulated seed, was the only assignable cause. And a similar instance has been already detailed to me, by an eminent Surgeon in very extensive practice, where this distressing symptom made its appearance on the use of the seed, and subsided as soon as the obnoxious remedy was finally discontinued.

That I had now seen enough to satisfy ordinary curiosity I readily admit, and under ordinary circumstances it would have been abundantly satisfactory; but at every turn I was yet doomed to hear some healing prodigy detailed, and the gentle intimation that “Othello’s occupation’s gone,” was as often, and as kindly remembered. More than once have I been reminded, in practice, of my own unmeritorious exertions, which, though borne in silence, piqued me to the very nerve, when I saw them abruptly thrust aside, to make way for the more famed, and favored nostrum. Private families, too, not at all friendly to quackery, were constrained to bear honorable testimony to its distinguished merits. Two Physicians of the first

rate practice in London, I knew were in the habit of giving it their occasional sanction, and I heard from a highly valued friend, that an epileptic case of nearly half a century's growth, had actually taken flight at its mystical doings !

About this time an artfully drawn up paper, carrying with it certainly some show of sincerity, fell in my way. Judging from the respectability of its vouchers, it seemed no longer deniable, that almost unerring success followed the wholesale consumption of the seed, both at home and abroad ; and its superiority was proclaimed in a tone of such confident boldness, united with a show of so much pious philanthropy and pure disinterestedness, that it was a mercy the President of the Royal College of Physicians did not lend a believing ear. In the midst of so many puzzles and paradoxes—in which, by the bye, the evidence of one's senses was fairly belied,—I determined *to dive into its very essence*, and thus set at least my own mind at rest ;— to put it to the most rigid and repeated chemical test, and then try its results by speculative doses on myself. It is true, I had previously injured my health by similar freaks with hydrocyanic acid, strychnine, and other novelties ; yet at the commencement of this feat I considered myself a fair subject for its

exhibition, being simply and plainly dyspeptic, from a deficient secretion of bile: and as my medical friends were as much in the dark with respect to its modus operandi in the accomplishment of these cures as myself, I was buoyed up with the hope, that if I discovered its miracle-working properties, I might be able by my own sensations to disclose all its secrets to others. With these views did I take to it, at first kindly and quietly, swallowing the seed whole, and in faithful compliance with the prescribed regulations, that the thing might have fair play, and a full opportunity to develope itself. The inconvenience it produced, during the penance of a full three weeks, I disregarded pretty much, although it sadly aggravated the very symptoms it professed to remove, with an unvarying inclination rather to constipate, than unbind the bowels: it created generally (but more particularly as the dose was increased) that sensation between pain and pleasure, which arises from an over-abundant dinner; a feeling of dryness and heat along the intestinal canal, especially about the rectum, giving also to its contents the most abominable fetor. And this odious property, I am convinced, in part transpires through the cutaneous exhalents, as my person became not only offensive to others, but perceptibly so to myself.

I am not, I fancy, easily dissuaded from a good resolve, let the nature of the undertaking be what it may ; but in this pursuit I should have slackened to a halt, had I not been goaded on by the incredible assertion of an eminent Physician, that White Mustard Seed was in its operation uniformly laxative. Therefore, to confirm a discovery so important, I determined in my obstinacy to take at least enough, knowing that in these days nothing is more common, than for all classes to chime in with the popularity of any thing having a name, rather than bestow one thought upon the possibility of an imposition.<sup>2</sup> My daily potion, then, of this delectable trash was gradually augmented, aided by tea, and the diluent help of barley water, until, finding my stock of amiability decline, even to the loss of temper, I made one grand and desperate effort, and engorged at a meal as much as sufficed me for both breakfast and dinner. In proportion as the bulk was increased, the “ flatulence” costiveness, and “ oppression” were multiplied ; and at last to such an unbearable extent, that had it not been for the timely assistance of a friendly Seidlitz, I might have had good cause to rue so silly an exploit.

If not the most painful, this was by far the most disagreeable experiment to which I ever submitted. The more than putrid disgust with which I was enveloped by the disengagement of sulphuretted hydrogen gas, not only rendered me entirely miserable, but personally loathsome to all who came within reach of its unsavoury influence. Any one fond of Mustard Seed for breakfast, may take a pound or more, and he will speedily be convinced that instead of active purgation, the *faculty of distentiveness* is its chief characteristic.

I do not mean to deny that the virulence of disease hath not been temporarily softened down during its exhibition, I wish merely to advance that the merit, whatever there might be, was with the occasional medicine necessary for the dislodgment of the seed, and that it could not, without an admixture of the ridiculous, be attributed to any mysterious agency, or specific action of the thing itself. I am well satisfied, and it does not require a ghost to predict what hereafter will be so manifest to all, that White Mustard Seed swallowed whole, or taken in medicable doses as an extract, infusion, or decoction, possesses no intrinsic property to make it worth the notice of the Profession, or the invalid.

I am willing also to admit, that it is the great recommendation of a public nostrum, that it be medicinally harmless and inoperative ; for were it endowed with the least activity, it would, on the strangely constituted frames of many, prove abundantly fatal.<sup>3</sup> Still, allowing it exempt from all pernicious tendency, so much fondness for its use has been excited, by the plausible and pretended cures which are yet circulating to an almost unlimited extent, that thousands in their blind dotage are disposed to lean, even in the last struggle of disease, upon its treacherous aid ; and thus, to society, in the end, the consequences must be frightful. There is nothing more difficult to uproot than the settled prejudice of a sick chamber. I have seen a vulgar notion obstinately persisted in, while a vehement disorder was running before their eyes a rapid course of inevitable fatality ; and what are we not to expect from the circumstance of an insignificant article, heretofore in culture merely as a table salad, being this year in growth to an amazing extent, on the supposition that it is eminently qualified to release us from every infirmity of our nature ?

All drugs powerfully operative, such as opium, squills, and nux vomica, have each a peculiar principle which is extractive, and on which their

activity depends ; but White Mustard Seed, when analytically examined, has no palpable base on which any operation can be founded ; at least, it has none possessing medical qualities, or with which it can entirely part when the seed is swallowed whole. It would be honoring the thing with as much scientific attention as it merits, were we merely to notice that it contains about 20 per cent of fixed oil, with a residuum wholly unfit for any other pharmaceutical purpose than an ordinary cataplasm : but in these days of chemical refinement, it may be necessary for the sake of accuracy to observe, that a volatile portion depositing sulphur, is separable from the bland oil by alcohol, and that it is even parted with in some degree, when the seeds are slow in their transit, as is shewn by the execrable odour to which I have before alluded, and with which all will be more or less attainted, in proportion to the quantity made use of. Perhaps oats, beans, and some other grain are indued with a similar constituent ; for the same, but more intense and repelling effluvia, is very apparent in post-horses when highly fed. It is furthermore to be remarked, that the notoriety of this remedy in Paris, induced MM. Henry (fils) and Gorot to put it to the very extraordinary chemical torture of extracting from it that which it does

not virtually possess. They evaporated the volatile element of which I have just spoken, into a solid and crystallizable substance, and then gave it the conjectural appellation of "sulpho-sinapic acid." Now I humbly contend, this sulpho-sinapic acid contains no sulphur (it being lost in the evaporation), and what is more unfortunate for White Mustard Seed, that, individually employed, it is, as an internal remedy, wholly inapplicable and useless.

Besides, the stomach cannot grapple with what passes through it mechanically, so as to insure the benefit of its rare and inmost quality; nor could we expect that it should do so in this instance, when we observe the difficulty with which the entire seed is acted upon by other agents. It is not possible to obtain a specimen of this newly discovered substance by macerating the unbruised seed in cold or boiling water, nor even by digestion in alcohol; and if submitted to distillation in a common alembic with water, the portions of liquid first coming over are without pungency, or any other taste than that of a "weak infusion of malt." To shew however, that the stomach does not, and cannot close upon the uncrushed seed so as to extract its entire virtuality, I collected some which did not escape the

alimentary canal until the second day: the oil yielded to expression, and the volatile portion was dissolved and separated from the fixed oil by alcohol. On submitting this alcoholic solution to evaporation, a few solid and acidulous crystals were obtained, but they did not differ in any way from those which I had previously secured from the fresh and unemployed seed.

Dr. Paris<sup>4</sup> has told the world, that the “*virtues*” of White Mustard Seed depend on this volatile principle. Now, instead of borrowing such authority from M. Julia Fontenelle, it would have been as creditable to Dr. Paris, and quite as useful to the profession, if he had written from actual observation rather than idle supposition. In a man of so much established repute, we are very apt to receive his suggestion as an aphorism at once, and thus it is handed down to our children, who, like ourselves, may follow in the beaten path of their ancestors, walking by rule, and practising in strict conformity with nosological definition.<sup>5</sup> The truth is, White Mustard Seed has no virtue; it has no significant or manageable operation, or it might with great probability have been thus accounted for; and Dr. Paris, although he has declared, he has no doubt respecting its utility, cannot exemplify

such a belief by a reference to any part of his own practice. And I thus abruptly challenge any respectable Physician in Europe to prove a single case of actual disease, in which by its medical operation, alone, a permanent cure has been established. It is in fact little less than lunacy to argue, that a compound without one active particle to communicate, can ever signalise itself as a medicine, or be successfully employed in the removal of disease. How comes it, if it be so richly fraught with the goodly *materiel* for the alleviation of structural, or even functional distemperature, that our Hospital Reports make no practical show of its application ? These are the legitimate registers wherein a faithful narrative is surely found of all that is worthy of notice or record. And why, may I ask, do not the various periodicals devoted to the profession exhibit some instance of its powerful medication ; some detail of particular symptoms, where the peculiarities of its operation are set forth under the signature of an approved practitioner ? As yet I have never seen a case in print at all superior to those I have had pressed upon me in the streets. Above all, if it be this volatile portion, this enlivening essence which alone imparts so much wholesome vigour to decaying nature, how comes it that it cannot confirm itself indi-

ividually, and like quinine in suitable doses, carry home to all the estimable qualities of the parent substance ?

Really, one has been led to imagine that its healing resources were unemptiable, and that all human sickliness would vanish on their being brought into action ; yet, strange to say ! every effort has been made, and without prejudice, to adapt the substance to some practical purpose. Its various chemical products, too, have been taken into the stomach without fear, although their operation was unknown ; and I really do not believe the personal risk I have encountered, or the report which I can make upon the whole, will produce any further benefit to society, than warning others against so foolish an example.

On the other hand, we are informed by a medico-clerical scrap of paper (printed, published, selling, and even giving away in reams by wholesale), that during the transit of the seed, it gives out a peculiar mucilage to the alimentary canal, and that to such grateful communication *alone* we are to attribute its “wonderful” performances. Now this mucilage happens to be as insipid, and virtueless as linseed, and resembles it closely in every respect. Its curative preten-

tions are easily put to the test, as it resides exclusively in the husk, and readily yields itself to boiling water. It is moreover somewhat singular, that the seed should accomplish so tortuous and dreary a journey ; should distribute so much comfortable refreshment on the road, and then exhibit the same complexional appearance, and carry the same weight and plumpness, that it did at the outset. Yet I have shewn to others, by honest experiment, that this is truly the case, and that no chemical evolution whatever takes place when the circuit of the digestive passages is made within the twelve hours. If, however, this period happens to be prolonged by any stubborn lodgment, which it often makes, in the cells of the colon, an acrid, and sulphurous portion of the volatile oil will be disentangled, but certainly no more “tonic and animating principle” is parted with, than the half-famished horse derives from the unbroken oat which may be daily seen unchanged in the litter of the stable.

If the rectum be already strictured, the seed will imbed itself in the pouch formed by distension immediately behind the seat of the affection ; and after a lapse of two weeks and upwards, I have known it to escape from time to time, bereaved in part only of what it originally possessed, and al-

tered in contour merely as regards being slightly (not “very much”) swollen.

Another set of wiseacres tell us, it is by some sorcery, or spell-like influence, that it dissipates the grievous, and unendurable ills of humanity. As this sort of sophistry sets the gravity of philosophy at defiance, and would lead me where I am very incompetent to guide myself, I shall only remark, that the secret, and intangible property here dwelt upon, has no reference to any operative force enjoyed by the thing as a medicine.

To obtain any professional end, I would advise that a few of the seeds were slightly crushed ; and if given in cold phlegmatic habits, they might advantageously yield out that kind of pungency, which is akin to the diffusive warmth we derive from the well-known condiment at table. But the stimulus could not grasp hold of any vital or important function ; it cannot localize or concentrate itself, as other remedies do, upon particular parts, such as the liver, kidneys, or urethra. How, where, or upon what principle, then, it can be employed, or in what part of its anatomy lie hid the many virtues about which men rave so much, I cannot either by conjecture or

practical enquiry, come to any satisfactory, or reasonable conclusion.

'Tis true, and it is well known in all nurseries, that a strong infusion of the crushed seed will excite the stomach to sickness; but when swallowed whole it escapes digestion, and traverses the alimentary tube mechanically, like the filings of tin, and the hairs of the dolichos pods, but without affording any thing like the vermifuge excellence for which those two substances are distinguished.

It is indeed, my dear Sir, though a simple, a somewhat mischievous article for intelligent folks to dignify with the reputation of " specific ; " a specific, too, for nine-tenths of the formidable ailments with which by this climate and our folly we are continually assailed. It has been again thrust into ephemeral notice by the mistaken zeal of some sincere philanthropist, or, what is far more likely, by the artful scheming of some of our daily projectors, who never speculate beyond their own benefit. Had it been gifted with any remedial powers, or destined to uphold the popularity it aspires to, it would not have sunk into forgetfulness eight-and-twenty years ago, when a similar attempt, with

less money, was made to force it down the capacious throat of credulity.

We know full well, that the unblushing mountebank who fattens on the proverbial gullibility of John Bull, calculates the sale of his imposture to be exactly proportioned to the sum sunk in its publicity ; and pills made of bread, have already achieved wonders, when the mental pre-possession was strong in their favour.

I say again, had White Mustard Seed been really invested with a tythe of the sovereign virtue it has assumed, its own merit would have perpetuated itself. Once admitted an approved medicine, it would, under the sanction of the College, have shared in that triumph over disease, which constitutes the hope and professional repute of every honest practitioner.

As it is, my labour goes for nought, unless the fairy-dreamer in White Mustard Seed will believe that it is as wise to trust the legitimate Physician as an empty nostrum, or the bolder promises of an impudent quack. On some sound and proven foundation alone, can he hope to rebuild a healthy and durable structure. It has been on this ground only, that all to whom

I have made allusion in this letter, obtained substantial and lasting relief; and it was gladly resorted to in the end, when the favourable prejudice could no longer conceal the untoward and insidious impulse given to the malady, by the crude and uncongenial stimulus daily excited by its unwholesome use.

I certainly should have spared myself this waste of time and application, had I regarded the quackery necessary to secure for it any thing like favourable notice from the public.

In the very same breath it is recommended for diseases exactly opposite to each other — diseases not at all connected by cause, seat, development, or curative indication. It can by one and the same dose, either excite, or diminish excessive action. We are told — “It is always safe in the absence of decidedly inflammatory symptoms;” yet it is to be given in scarlet, typhus, and other fevers, which never existed without them. It is proposed for the relief of “a scanty secretion of urine,” without inheriting more diuretic peculiarities than so much unground wheat; and it unfailingly removes dyspepsia, with all its attending miseries, without the least power to influence the action of the liver, on

whose disordered function the malady depends. As I have stated nothing I cannot prove and defend, I am ready to break a lance on fair ground with any one willing to contend *for the sake of science alone*; but if I am assailed by a horde of interested Mustard Dealers, I shall estimate the attack pretty much as I now value the article they vend.

Already have they had the impious hardihood to advertise their calling “a blessing to mankind;” and if aught can beget the genuine feeling of contempt, and make that feeling mount to indignation, even, it is surely to be pardoned when we see our Religion prostituted to so base a purpose..

I am, &c.

B

SPRING GARDENS,  
*November, 1826.*

## NOTES.

---

[1] THIS case corresponds with those which have been so ably displayed by Dr. Hewett; and he really deserves the thanks of the Profession for the valuable pathological remarks with which they are accompanied.

[2] The pitiable labors of the would-be author, are a continual disgrace to English medical literature. I mean of one whose only talent consists in dressing up in a new language the property of others, and then palming the miserable pilferings upon his brotherhood, as the fruits of his own industry. Let a student purchase half a dozen writers who have treated the same disease (Dyspepsia for instance), and he will find the greater part of each work occupied by the same anatomical and physiological history of digestion, and on coming to the point of a thick 8vo. ten or twelve shilling volume, the useful matter is easily condensible within a half-sheet of foolscap.—I suppose, in the present crowded state of the profession, it is really necessary for a man to write something—any thing—before he can emerge from his natural obscurity:—this is certain, that in these days of empiricism, he who deals most in the marvellous, is the most likely to make his fortune.

[3] I know a lady with whom one grain and a half of calomel would produce the most distressing ptyalism; yet to another I have given twenty five grains, and repeated it at the end of six hours, without producing any sensible effect; this in itself would shew that no active medicine can be indiscriminately employed.

[4] This learned and distinguished Physician has lately put forth an elementary work on *Peptic Philosophy*. At page

172 we read, that new bread is indigestible, and unwholesome, because “it swells in the stomach like a sponge.”—Now, if I had a pupil in physiology of three months’ standing who betrayed such a woful lack of information as this, I should blush exceedingly for his tutor. It is impossible that *any thing* can *swell* in the stomach.—The distention, here unwittingly referred to the dilation of the substance itself, is occasioned by the disengagement of carbonic acid gas, the bread being ill fermented.

[5] Because Hippocrates has somewhere said, that beer and milk are alike hurtful in fever, the generality of authors have prejudged them so. Milk is not only a grateful beverage but an appropriate diet; and beer, particularly porter, is, in the last stage of typhus, one of the best diffusible stimulants we have.

[6] At the present time, I have three cases of this kind under my care. In one, the patient was persuaded to leave me for White Mustard Seed: the constant heat and stimulus it kept up in the alimentary organs, sensibly aggravated every symptom; and I should conceive, where there is the least tendency to stricture in those parts, the disposition would be speedily confirmed, and the disorder hurried onwards to a fatal termination, by any perverse adherence to so pernicious a custom. The other cases are both plainly traceable to the habitual use of aloetic pills. Aloes, from their cheapness, are the principal constituent of most purgative quack medicine, and although they enter largely into the present edition of our *Pharmacopœia* they are, with very few exceptions indeed, only fit for the more ungentle practice of a farrier.

*Preparing for Publication, by the same Author,*

## PROVERBS,

Illustrating every Variety of ACCOUCHEMENT, and proving that  
the Severity of PARTURIENT PAINS may be sensibly diminished  
without injury to either Mother or Child.





